



# Reflect & Connect Pack

**Collaboration is messy – why people are the key to partnership working**

Leadership Theme – Collaborating & Influencing

Digital Community Event

6<sup>th</sup> July 2023



# How to use this pack

## If you attended this event...

- ▶ **Use this pack as 'reflective practice'** to ask yourself some questions to build on your learning from the event:
  - ▶ Revisit the **Our Focus** page to:
    - ▶ Ask yourself the **questions offered for consideration**
    - ▶ Choose one or more **resources offered for consideration** to help you reflect on the questions
  - ▶ Revisit the real stories by watching a video on the **Our Contributors** page
  - ▶ Read the **Our Collective Learning, Key Discussion Themes** and **Personal Reflections** page to explore the themes, ideas, comments and take away points from the participants who attended the live event
- ▶ **Finally ask yourself:**
  - ▶ What have I learned from this event, in the moment and now?
  - ▶ What one thing will I do differently going forward?

## If you are using this for connection...

- ▶ **Use this as a resource pack** to use in a team meeting, in person or online event.
  - ▶ **Review** the pack in order to understand:
    - ▶ The why and how on the **Our Focus** page
    - ▶ Who was involved in the collective learning from the **Our Community** page – this offers insight to where our participants came from
    - ▶ Watch the real stories from **Our Contributors** page
    - ▶ Read the **Our Contributors' Learning, Our Collective Learning** and **Personal Reflections** pages to explore the themes, ideas, comments and take away points from the participants who attended the live event
    - ▶ **Revisit** the **Our Focus** page to find resources and provocations
  - ▶ **Decide** what kind of event or session you want to run and with whom
  - ▶ **Check out** our [DIY Guide](#) to hosting a 1 hour conversation and our community resource [Creating safe spaces online : 6 practises to build psychological safety](#)
- ▶ **Contact us** if you have any questions or would like some support to set up or run a session using this pack. We are very happy to help! [Email the team](#)

# Our focus

**Collaboration is messy – why people are the key to partnership working** as part of our leadership capability theme of Collaborating and Influencing.

We explored how successful and practical collaboration can be achieved with compassion, character, and purpose.

We were joined by real leaders who shared their experience of leading partnership working. They spoke about how they faced complexity and focused on relationships to achieve successful collaboration.

## Questions offered for consideration

- ▶ Who do you admire as a natural collaborator and how have they inspired you?
- ▶ What do you think are the most important aspects for collaboration?
- ▶ How do you support collaborative approaches within the system you work in and with colleagues at all levels?
- ▶ Are you comfortable with the term 'influencing' in collaboration and are you open to being influenced?

## Resources offered for consideration



14 mins read – [How to improve your collaboration skills and be a better collaborator](#)



2 mins read – [Infographic: Creating a Culture of Collaboration](#)



14 mins watch - [A guide to collaborative leadership](#)



33 mins listen - [How Inquiry Improves Collaboration](#)

# Our contributors

With a focus on storytelling and reflections, our contributors shared their experience and insight.

[Watch TracyAnne's video](#)



**TracyAnne Millar**

Employee Director & Branch Secretary UNISON  
NHS Lothian

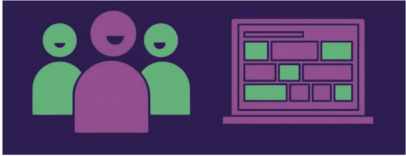
[Watch Jillian's video](#)



**Jillian Torrens**

Head of Adult Services (Mental Health, Acute and Complex Care)  
Argyll & Bute Health & Social Care Partnership  
NHS Highland

# Our contributors' learning



- ▶ We aim to build on all of the previous work we have undertaken as a community and collectively explore what good leadership looks like in practice.
- ▶ We invited the community to listen to our contributors, explore what this means for us, and what practical learning we can take away using breakout groups to enable real conversations and connections.

**TracyAnne** shared her journey and experience as a shop steward with UNISON over the last 31 of her 40 years with the NHS

When I go back 31 years ago collaboration didn't exist if I'm being perfectly honest. It was very combative and normally one side conceded whether that be the union side or management side but there was nothing in the middle.

20 years ago [the Scottish Government] decided to develop partnership working between management and the trade unions... you will sit down at a table and negotiate and failure to agree should be a very last resort. I was dragged to the partnership table kicking and screaming... why would I trust managers? It took me probably 5 years to fully buy in to what partnership working could achieve.

Is it messy? Of course it is because management will see the goal that they need to get to and that'll be point A, the partnership lead will see the impact that's going to have on staff so their starting point is B and we've got to find a way through because the end point still has to be delivered and I think it's the method in which it's delivered is where collaboration comes in.

The relationships are absolutely key for collaboration. If you don't have that respectful, honest, open relationship with the people that you're sitting around the table with, you are not going to collaborate.

... when I reflect back on my trade union career I've probably achieved so much more for the staff and the members of my union through collaboration and working together with management, than I ever did holding up a placard and demanding whatever I was demanding at the time.

**Jillian** shared reflections from her collaborative work with colleagues from third sector and government, looking at a real issue that was live within the system she worked

I've been working in various HSCPs across the country, and I am absolutely committed to integrated working and that interface between health and social care I think is really, really, important and the benefits that that can bring to the people that we support as well as to our staff, colleagues etc.

We began to have lots of conversations with partner agencies and... what we have always been strong on in remote and rural areas is that collaborative working, that working with partner agencies, people around the table and people really were around the table from third sector organisations, voluntary organisations before the inception of integrated working.

... it's our internal barriers, it's people's fears, people's perceptions about offending other organisations... and not being able to have confidence in themselves to say let's run with this.

... trust and confidence is required in every working relationship in order to get the best out of teams, people, services and where there is that trust and confidence the outcomes are much better.

I think the interesting thing is... the trust and confidence that lacked was internally actually within the HSCP it wasn't about these external relationships.

... what some of this conversation has generated is a relationship with Greater Glasgow & Clyde... and what they've done is they've invited us to the table and that's great for us... so we're now able to influence that, shape that, we're able to learn a lot from what is going on.

# Our collective learning

Trust is a key element of any form of collaboration

We've been having the same conversation for years about the need for collaboration.... we need to step up and take risks, challenge assumption around "what's allowed"

Micromanagers are more likely to be poor at collaboration – this approach is indicative of an individual that likes to keep power – the converse is also true, those that have trust in their staff are more likely to be open to power sharing

Collaboration is key if we are going to improve care at home services and social work services – there are so many players

Sometimes you don't have an important role or influence in a collaboration but being at the table is enough to start with. Build it from there

There is a need to be aware of ego and have the skills / self-confidence / emotional intelligence to be able to damp it down if it is a barrier to collaboration

Collaboration can be messy when people don't understand where others are coming from – or what is important to them

Take time to build internal relationships; create solid foundations for collaboration

Have the ability to simply say 'I don't know' instead of bluffing. It was recognised that our system, from right at the very top doesn't appear to tolerate this or failure – the action is different to the rhetoric

No blame culture

Embrace conflict as a potential for opportunity, diversity; a benefit rather than a hindrance or a negative thing

There's a reluctance to open up the window and bring people in

Have clear roles and responsibilities so that everyone involved knows what the boundaries are – Terms of Reference are useful for this as it allows for the discussions

If you don't get proper buy-in it can "bite you on the bum" – leaders / senior managers agree something, and others (doing the work) may not be bought in / share the same vision

Helpful in influencing - preparation, provision of info and data, establishing quick wins, knowing your audience and adjusting your communication style/approach accordingly

Vital to invest time in building relationships and trust – don't need to always agree

We all have an influence whether we like it or not; we have bias whether intentional or not

TraceyAnne's point that it took 5 years to build those relationships with trust rang true – building trust is not a quick process

You can see what you want to do but it's so difficult when faced with a tick box exercise

Everyone comes to a partnership or collaboration with their own personal history and experience

Inclusivity with supportive feedback and embracing diversity (the word in its wider sense, including different agendas, backgrounds, cultures etc)

Influencing is not the same as coercing... feels hard to separate them at times

Agree purpose and understanding

It feels like the 'messy bit' will be there, perhaps there is something about embracing it and facilitating a space that allows everyone to bring something to the table

Understand who the real stakeholders are (it's not CEOs); codesign with service users; involved and included to design their own service

# Personal reflections

## What is your one key reflection from your discussions?

- ▶ Building credibility not just relationships, and taking time to understanding the relationships, power, formal and informal, and the unofficial cultures that are coming together
- ▶ Collaboration isn't always easy but good to know that people have the same challenges, however, it is worth the effort
- ▶ No matter what our starting point in partnership working is, optimism and curiosity can help us evolve our thinking and develop strong relationships with others
- ▶ People in completely different roles can have very similar challenges. It helps to illustrate how important building individual relationships is - to find that middle ground and make connections

## What is one practical step you will take to apply the learning from today?

- ▶ Be more willing to be influenced!
- ▶ I am going to share reflections within my peer support group also suggest this topic for a team meeting/learning event
- ▶ Be braver in my communication with others
- ▶ Will keep in mind the importance of connection and empathy in collaboration
- ▶ Add to my ongoing toolbox
- ▶ Use the principles of CIP with other teams
- ▶ Absorb what I have heard in own practice

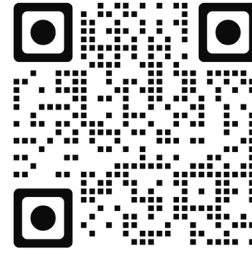
## Your feedback

- ▶ Great opportunity to take time out to reflect and learn from others
- ▶ Really accessible and helpful workshop on the theme of collaboration
- ▶ Great presenters, facilitation and discussion - I think folk really valued the opportunity to connect with people across the system
- ▶ Group interaction was very useful
- ▶ Found it difficult to relate to the speakers
- ▶ Made me think about my practice

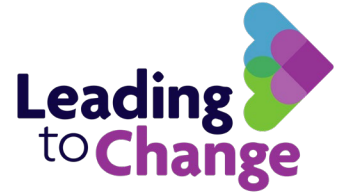
## Final reflections

- ▶ It's interesting about the culture of remote and rural - the environmental conditions helped shape some of the default collaborative behaviours
- ▶ Influencing is sharing the vision, having stakeholders influence the vision
- ▶ There can be an expectation to achieve quickly but it takes time for people to be open about what is really going on for them
- ▶ To support a collaborative approach, establishing trust and building relationships is a starting point. Mistrust is something that national agencies might face at the start and is something that needs to be worked on, and this can take time

# Moving forward



Scan for  
events



## ▶ **Tell us more** [hello@leadingtochange.scot](mailto:hello@leadingtochange.scot)

- ▶ We read and reflect on all feedback we receive which shapes our future events. Do you have anything you wish to share?
- ▶ How did you use this Reflect & Connect pack? What was useful or what would you like to see?
- ▶ We would love to hear your ideas for potential topics and contributors
- ▶ Do you have thoughts and learning to share? Would you like to write a blog or know someone who could? Our team can fully support you with this.

## ▶ **To find out more**, please explore

- ▶ [Our community resources](#) – read our latest report or watch a 3 minute key summary, consider our community created assets or watch our short animations
  - ▶ [Our many leadership, sector and programme resources](#) available to read, watch and engage with from internal and external sources
- ▶ We hope to see you again soon at one of our [next events](#) – scan the QR code above to find out more







**Thank You!**

